



# Griffith Community Crime Watch

From time to time I come across an outstanding example of neighborly relationships. These examples provide us with a glimpse of what can be accomplished today through neighbors choosing harmony within their block or area. I came across this group when visiting a "Block Garage Sale" and started wondering: "How did you make this happen? Why has your block become be a well-oiled unit?" Upon receiving the answers to these questions, I was pleasantly surprised and I was inspired that this spirited group is right here in Griffith. This is what I found out.



At this point in time, when most neighbors barely know one another, we have an outstanding example here in Griffith on the west side, of what can result from residents choosing to respectfully know their neighbors. This exceptional group consisting of eleven homes on one block has won one of 1500 nationwide block ice cream party in the *Edy's Slow Churned Neighborhood Salute*. And for good reason, they are close enough to operate effectively as a group and respect each others' values enough to accommodate each other's need for space and privacy.

Their celebration was an afternoon/evening of swimming, volleyball, a piñata, bean bag tournament, bon fire and socializing.

They have come to know one another mainly because of their children's common activities such as: school, sports, or through coaching sports, or growing up together in the neighborhood. This has resulted in watching out for one another's kids and kids becoming lifelong companions.

Those who grew up with each other chose to stay on the block as adults with their neighbors whose goals are similar. Now a second generation of kids has grown up together. Parents count their neighbors in their support systems, "...a good neighbor is literally minutes away."

A widow on the block has the assistance of the youth who will mow her grass, walk her dog, shovel snow, put her garbage cans on the curb and bring them back in at the end of the day, and the adults even assist with plantings, washing windows, and trimming trees. When someone is ill, the neighbors pitch in to take up the slack.

They think well of one another and respect each other's opinions though they might not always see eye to eye. Should there be a difference of opinion the issue is resolved through talking and remembering their common goals. When referring to these differences one neighbor

said, "We have different personalities but we've never let that define us."



# Progressive Dinner!

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These tight-knit people work hard at unity as is demonstrated by their functions together inside and out of the neighborhood. An example, one of them had a sorority dance to go to and the others were welcome and attended. Consensus is they spend over 200 hours per year together helping one another, planning block functions, or enjoying them.

Each year they have many events: a Halloween party with live music for dancing, a costume contest (costumes are mandatory for all), games for the kids, pumpkin decorating, and a hayride; a Fall block party; block garage sale coordinated by the gals but supported by the guys; Fourth of July party; and what they call their Christmas Progressive Dinner. While all of these activities are planned months in advance by a core group of gals, husbands are eager to do what they can, setting up or cooking whatever is needed.

The Dinner is truly a unique idea wherein each participating household prepares and serves one part of the meal at their home. After finishing this part of the meal they move onto the next participating household. This means at the first home, perhaps appetizers are served. Then they literally move on to the next home and portion of the meal, the main course, and so on and so forth until dessert is served. When everyone has eaten the group goes Christmas caroling. It might as well be a Currier and Ives event.

These open-hearted people offered many suggestions on how to develop the type of trust they have nurtured but it all started with a choice, the choice to make their neighborhood a real community.

On the rare occasion that a home is sold the new owners are strongly encouraged to become a part of their little community by the “welcome wagon”.

When asked how they cope with crime elements the reply was, “we lead by example, friendliness, and respect, and let them know it won’t be tolerated; go elsewhere.” When asked about a neighborhood block club, the unanimous response was, “We are the block club.” There is no formal description needed. Their block club exists, not to prevent crime but to create unity. Unity is the key component to crime prevention.

Having a fortified neighborhood is the direct result of people putting forth a strong effort to know one another. A trusted neighbor can be a life saver or life supporter. This type of trust does not come over night but rather with being close enough to observe consistent behaviors that show others how we will act and react to a given situation.

This neighborhood has proven to be a solid community that will likely weather any storm. While most neighbor relationships are disintegrating, this alliance of neighbors is developing intergenerational traditions.

Griffith’s residents are capable of displaying such cohesiveness. There are surely more “blocks” such as this one, we are just unaware of them because they don’t ring their own bell either. Bring in more Edy’s!

